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James Faneels.

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# The Spiritual Life of the Business Man




9 Sermons Delibered in the  
Brick Presbyterian Church,  
Rochester, N. Y., by the Pastor,  
William Hivers Taylor, D. D.



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To the  
Men of the Brick Church  
with  
Gratitude, Affection and  
Respect.



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# I

## THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE BUSINESS MAN: ITS PERILS

2 CORINTHIANS 4:18—“ *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*”

One of the first things I had to learn after leaving my theological school and beginning the work of life was respect for the intellect of business men. My father was a clergyman. My grandfather was a clergyman. My great grandfather was a clergyman. My great-great-grandfather was a clergyman. At one time I could count more than twenty of my kinsmen who were ministers, nearly all in one Church, the Reformed Dutch Church in America.

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Father, grand-father and great-grand-father were Trustees of the college from which my three brothers and myself were graduated. I was brought up in an atmosphere of books. My great men were writers, philosophers, orators, theologians. I well remember how annoyed I used to be when any of the men in the official board of my first church—plain farmers they were, but most of them men of excellent judgment—ventured to question the wisdom of any of my opinions or plans. But I was only twenty-two then, and it is a satisfaction now to think that I rapidly learned better.

The succeeding years have replaced that early disparagement with a steadily growing admiration of the intellectual power of the men who direct large business enterprises. There are no better minds in any department of human activity than those to be found in the business world.

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At equal pace with my admiration for the ability of business men has grown my admiration for their moral qualities. Even the minister, sheltered as he is from some of the most powerful temptations that beset other men, finds it hard enough to be a good man. How much harder must it be for the man whose whole working life is passed out in the storm! Now and then I catch a glimpse, as through a window, of the real fury of the blast. Once in a while I stand where I can feel a little of it myself. Many a time I see exhibitions of moral courage and strength, of fidelity and self-sacrifice on the part of business men which make me say to myself, "I am afraid that if I were in that man's place I would not be as good as he."

I say these things here at the outset in order that you may know my spirit and attitude in venturing to preach these sermons. We are all of a piece. We are all men. I speak

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as a man to men, and as a specialist in one line to men who are specialists in other lines. The things which I shall say to you are only things which I should need to have said to me were I in your place.

One of the most important matters in all serious discussion is the definition of terms. The first thing a thoughtful man would be likely to say on hearing the general topic of these sermons is, "What does he mean by the spiritual life of the business man?" I mean what Paul meant when he spoke the words of our text, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

What were these things "not seen?" To begin with, certain noble moral ideals, or principles, or whatever you

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may be pleased to call them, such as truth, righteousness, justice, honor, purity, love. To go a step further, the immortal spirit of man. A step further still, a world, a sphere, a universe in which these moral ideals really rule; a realm unseen, from which all things seen do emanate, and from which all things seen are controlled; a realm of which, though it envelopes us as an atmosphere, we are as unconscious as the unborn child is of the world upon which it depends and into which it is to be ushered at birth; a realm of which man, by reason of his spiritual endowments as a child of God, is an heir. A step further still, a risen, glorified, all-powerful Christ. And last of all, the Unseen God. These, in the main, were the "things not seen" upon which Paul tried to keep the eye of his soul fixed, were they not?

The commerce a man has in his soul with these noble ideals, his loyalty to them in thought and conduct, and the

fellowship he has with his unseen God as revealed in Christ are what I would call his spiritual life.

This is not strictly speaking a definition. Exact definition is quite impossible. But there is not a man of us who does not know what is meant, not one of us who is not sensible of the difference between a man possessed of this spiritual quality of life and the man who lacks it, between the man whose supreme regard is for the unseen things of the Spirit and him whose controlling thought is for things material. Contrast Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ, and Felix the Roman Governor who "trembled" as the great Apostle reasoned of righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, but who would not reform his life or do justice to the prisoner before him, sending for him again and again in the hope that he might be given a bribe to release him, and, failing in this, leaving Paul in bonds to please his

rather difficult subjects. Or take Jesus and Pilate—Pilate with his cynical question, "What is truth?" and sacrificing a man whom he himself pronounced innocent lest, by doing justice, he should endanger his own position, and Jesus ready to go to His cross for the truth's sake.

Yes, we all know pretty well what it means—the spiritual life. The only point at which we need to be on our guard is that we have the right ideas as to its exercise and manifestations. A thoughtful physician to whom I showed one of the little cards announcing these sermons, looked at the topic, and said not skeptically, but by way of opening up the subject, "How is the business man to manifest the spiritual life? How, for instance, can a man show his spiritual life in selling a barrel of nails?"

I will tell you. First of all, by selling good nails. Next by selling them at a fair price. Next by the use he



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makes of the profit. Next by the way he treats his employes, his competitors and the public. Next by his general attitude toward business, property, wealth, life as a whole.

This brings out the point about which I am specially anxious just here, that the spiritual life is not a life apart from a man's common occupations. By the spiritual life I do not mean only that part of his life which a man spends in prayer, in religious contemplation, in common worship, in church work. These things, as we shall see later, are of more importance than many of us think. But they are only a part of the life spiritual, not the whole. A man's life is one and single. It is a unity—not a double or a divided thing. The spiritual life is an applied life. The things not seen constitute a working theory of life. Unless that theory be actually applied it is not a life at all, but only a theory. The spiritual life of



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a business man is not measured by the time which he takes from his business for spiritual thought and contemplation. It is the total effort which he makes to realize for himself in thought, feeling and conduct his spiritual ideals.

I hardly need to remind you that in his spiritual life as thus defined—in his retention of his spiritual ideals and in his effort to realize them—lies man's only claim to nobleness and his only hope of blessedness. Here is his glory. Here is his crown. Herein is the dignity of human personality. Without noble ideals what is man? A brute whose only superiority to the beast of the field is in his superior cunning. When he loses his spiritual ideals he loses himself. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own life?"

If this be true, then when we come to speak of perils to this life we are dealing with the gravest of subjects. I may

speak of only a few, and these in the briefest possible manner.

1. The first danger is that of *preoccupation and resulting neglect*. The interest of business is so engrossing, the work is so hard and so fatiguing, it seems so necessary, the demand for relaxation and diversion is so imperative whenever a morsel of leisure offers itself, that the average business man not only finds himself short of time for the care and culture of his spiritual ideals; he finds himself disinclined to think of them, and more or less incompetent to do so. Especially is this true when his interest in his business is stimulated by the feverish excitement of speculation, more and less legitimate.

Under this pressure the business man is in danger of ceasing to look at the things unseen and eternal, in danger of ceasing to nourish and feed his life from above. He does not realize that he is

missing the way and going off on a by-path, that he is like a boy sent on an errand who has forgotten what he was told to do. What respectable business man would say that the chief end of any man is to make a fortune? And yet how many business men are making that their chief end!

For a generation after the War of the Rebellion American men were to that extent business-mad that they neglected their bodies. They scarcely took time to eat; and when they did eat, it seemed not to matter much what it was. They took no exercise and little wholesome recreation. And the typical American business man became a nervous dyspeptic, breathless and panting. Whenever and wherever you met him he looked as if he had just finished a foot-race.

But things are different now. He takes time to eat and is careful what and how much he eats and drinks. He plays golf. He motors. He walks.

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He rides horse-back. He goes hunting and fishing. He takes vacations in summer. He breaks away from business in winter, and goes to mild climates, where he can rest and be out-of-doors. He is jealous of his sleep. He has learned that he cannot neglect his physical nature with impunity.

But can he neglect his spiritual nature with any better prospect? "How shall we escape if we neglect?" Your noble and beautiful ideals will not stay with you, my brother, if you do not cherish them. Your faith in things unseen will weaken and shrivel without use just as the muscles of your arm will. Your conscience will lose its sensitiveness if it is not heeded. The fire that is not tended goes out. The power that is not renewed is exhausted. There is no part of your nature, no part even of your material possessions that does not demand care. Do you expect your spiritual life, the most sensitive part of

your constitution as a man to be an exception? "How shall we escape if we neglect?"

2. The second peril that I shall name is *doubt*.

During the last fifty years, as we all know, there has been a vast increase in human knowledge and a profound change in the attitude of the human mind toward almost everything. Especially is this true in matters of religious belief. Doubt and uncertainty are in the air. Even Christian scholars disagree on many points.

All this cannot fail to make its impression upon men engaged in business. They read or hear that Science has done this and Biblical Criticism that to make some old belief no longer tenable. Lacking time and technical training to investigate thoroughly and sharing in the spirit of the age, they are apt to say, "Well, it seems impossible for any one

to tell just now how much of what the churches teach is true. It seems certain that a good deal of what they used to teach and of what a good many of them still teach has been discredited. I cannot sift the thing out. I think I will just go ahead on my own responsibility, do what I think is right and take the chances."

But nothing that has been said or done by anybody has shaken the real foundations of religion by so much as a single tremor. Good men may disagree with regard to the nature and degree of the inspiration of the Bible and the date and authorship of its books. They may disagree about the relation of God to His world, and so about miracles. They may disagree about the virgin birth of Jesus, and about His Divinity, which, by the way, are two separate questions; but the great fundamentals of religion are not thereby necessarily disturbed. God and the Soul; the un-

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seen world; the life of the spirit; the imperativeness of righteousness; the guilt, the misery and the destructiveness of sin; the power of Love, human and divine, to redeem; —all these and a hundred other things that are of the very essence of religion are just as certain as they ever were. "The foundation of God standeth sure." And no amount of doubt or uncertainty about non-essentials of religious faith can justify a man in neglecting the culture of his spiritual life, or remove him beyond the peril of losing all that is dearest to him in so doing.

3. The third and last peril I shall mention, and the most subtle and dangerous of all is *materialism*—the bondage of the spirit of man to things seen and temporal. With what malignant power this hostile force works upon the spiritual nature of the man of business he only knows, and all too often not even



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he until he awakes a prisoner in its grasp.

All day long and every day he is concerned with things that he can see and handle, measure and weigh, whose value can be computed in dollars and cents. Every question that arises is a concrete question. He deals with things, not as they ought to be but as they are. He must take men in the same way, not as they ought to be, but as they are. He is, as some one has said, a warrior. He takes the risks of war. He must practice the sleepless vigilance and exercise the courage, the prompt decision, the personal force demanded in war. There are those in the field who will do him up if they can. There are others who are honest and fair but not strong, so he must look well to his credits.

There is nothing essentially wrong in all this, nothing necessarily debasing. On the contrary there is a noble idealism that might and should be the soul of



commerce. Speaking at a dinner of the Leather Trade, in Boston, Phillip Brooks said:

"Each business touches the imagination. It stands between nature and man and turns the wonderful world to human use. Behind the carpenter, the waving forest. Behind the factory, the sunny cotton-field, and before both *Man*, human life, made stronger, happier by the transformation which they work.

"Behind your business is the world of cattle on a thousand hills, the lowing herd in the pasture, the rush of buffaloes across the prairie, the bleating of flocks in the fold,—these bright and airy pictures. And in front of it *Man*, with this tough element in his civilization which you bring there for his comfort."

But there is a higher idealism than this in commerce.

"Oh, is it not to widen man,  
Stretches the sea?"

And long ago Lord Bacon wrote: "Not for gold, or silver, or precious stones was commerce instituted, not for silks or spices, nor for any other of those crude ends at which thou aimest, but first and only for the child of God, that is to say, for light." And a greater than Lord Bacon taught us, in some of His most powerful parables, that this same world of business which seems so unfavorable to the spiritual life, in which a man's spiritual ideals are so constantly and so rudely shocked, where he is every day so forcibly reminded by "hard, crude fact" of the difference between what is and what ought to be, and where he is so sorely tempted—that this same world of business is the theatre in which his faithfulness is to be tested and proved, where he is to work out his own salvation or his own destruction.

The danger of the business man is the danger which encompasses every

soul of man—the danger that the forces in doing battle against which he must prove his right and ability to be a child of God may prove too strong for him—that “the dyer’s hand” should be “subdued to that he works in.” It is the danger that his spirit become materialized, instead of his material becoming spiritualized; that the ideal be brought down to the level of the real, instead of the real being lifted,—slowly, painfully, it may be, but still lifted—up to the ideal; that he, winning wealth and surrounding himself with the beautiful and delightful things that wealth can buy, and clothing himself with its power, should be satisfied with it all and not go beyond or look beyond to the spiritual meaning and use which alone can give wealth dignity, value, permanence. It is the danger that he will succumb to the false standards of morals that he sees prevailing around him. It is the danger that in the “enormous and fierce

competition of mankind" he will forget both the Divine Fatherhood and the Human Brotherhood, and become isolated, self-centered, indifferent to the miseries which he causes but does not see. It is the danger of sinking into that last most hideous form of materialism which disguises itself in the robes of Religion, and which, satisfied with itself, hating reproof, unwilling to learn, determined to hold on to all that it has, is—judged by the teaching of Jesus—the most hopeless of all moral states—worse than that of the drunkard or the sensualist, the state of the self-righteous, self-deceived, money-loving Pharisee. It is the danger against which Jesus sounded those solemn warnings whose echoes still ring through all the marts of trade and finance, and through the secret chambers of every business man's soul, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!" "What shall it

profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own life?" And the danger is not only in the possession of wealth. It lies equally in the pursuit of it. "They that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition."

Do not mistake. Business is not wrong. Competition need not be un-Christian. Wealth is not in itself an evil, but a good. The business world is not to be forsaken by Christian men. That is just where it is their duty to be. They are bound to stay right there and do their best, but to stay and work, as Christians, like Paul, looking not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, following the gleam, obedient to the heavenly vision.

Difficult? Yes, very. But not impossible; and by the eternal and immutable law of God, absolutely necessary.

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The man who does not make the effort loses all, loses himself.

CONCLUSION—Outside the teachings of our Lord Himself and His inspired Apostles I know of no more powerful presentation of these truths than that made by the late Geo. Frederick Watts, in three of his symbolic pictures.

One represents the rich young ruler who came to Jesus asking what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life and whom, we are told, Jesus loved. All that we see of him in the picture is his back. Jesus, putting his finger on the sore spot, the diseased, the infectious spot in his character, has told him to go and sell all that he had and give the proceeds to the poor and to come back and take up the cross and follow Him. And he has "made the great refusal," and is going away from Jesus.

Another shows a mature man, a man beginning to be elderly, sitting on a

scarlet throne. His golden crown is ornamented with a circlet of coins. His face and form are coarse and repellent, but full of brute force and determination. On one side of him kneels a fair girl, her face on his knee and her eyes shut in helpless submission, his closed fist, grasping her hair, resting on her neck. On the other side is the prostrate body of a man and on it the master-man rests his foot. It is Mammon, the god of wealth, the personification of Materialism, the god of this world. He looks out into space, utterly stolid and altogether unmindful of the naked Humanity under his hand and foot.

The third picture shows the outlines of a man's body lying upon a bier and covered with a shroud. On the floor in front of the bier lie a number of things which the dead man had used—a carved shield, a spear, and a gauntlet; a wine cup; a lyre; a half-open book; a



bunch of peacock feathers and some roses. Over all there hangs the stillness and repose of death. On the wall, in uncertain letters, as though traced by the dying man's hand, are three sentences, "What I spent I had." "What I saved I lost." "What I gave I Have." And beneath is the legend, "Sic transit gloria mundi," "So passes away the glory of the world."

"Life, Death! Life, Death!

This is the song of human breath."

That is the music to which we are all keeping step. With the sound of that tremendous tramp in our ears shall we look only at the things which are seen and temporal, or also at the things which are not seen and eternal?



## II

# THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE BUSINESS MAN: ITS POSSIBILITIES

1 JOHN 5:4—*“And this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.”*

This morning we take up the second of our themes—the possibilities of the spiritual life of the business man. What those possibilities seem to me to be is indicated in the text I have chosen. They are nothing less than victory—complete, final, everlasting victory over the world, using the term “world” in its New Testament sense as denoting the sum total of the forces of evil at work among men.

What a magnificent optimism there is in a full-orbed Christian faith! We might think that it would have been

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bold enough if John had said, "We believe that our faith will overcome the world." But that was not enough for him. He seizes the triumph from afar. He looks upon it as something already accomplished. He puts his verb in the past-perfect tense. "This is the victory that hath overcome the world."

Let us speak, first, of the possibilities of the business man's spiritual life within himself; and secondly, of the possibilities for society.

### I. THE POSSIBILITIES WITHIN THE MAN HIMSELF.

1. Of these the first to be met with is the possibility of its existence. Can a business man have a spiritual life? Can he be loyal to his ideals and stay in business? This is the thing that staggers him—the difference between the business-world's working code of morals and the ideals which, in his secret soul,

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he knows represent truth and right. I do not need to specify. You business men know what I mean. You know it by experience. You have tasted the bitterness. You have felt the iron enter your soul. You know how hard it is to be honest and to apply the golden rule of love in the fierce competition of business life. I have heard men say that it is impossible—that it would result in his being driven into bankruptcy.

I do not believe it. I believe that there are business men in every community who are putting their highest ideals of honesty and of kindness into practice in their business. I may be mistaken. But whether I am or not is not the essential thing. The essential thing is that we should make this issue plain and face it without fear or self-deceit. What is it? It is simply the question whether the business man is willing to sell his soul. Better, a million times better, that his business

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should go to ruin, better that he should be a bankrupt and a beggar; better that he should starve and—worst of all—see his wife and children starve, than that he should part with that without which he ceases to be the noble thing God meant him to be, and sinks down dishonored and undone. “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own life?”

Is this too much to ask? Is it an altogether absurd demand? Have not men died in countless numbers for liberty and for native land? If we should go to war with a first class Power would not duty to our country take precedence of business and even of family claims and strew land and sea with the bodies of martyrs slain? Not a day passes that men and women of noble ideals do not devote themselves as living sacrifices on the altars of their loves—giving up their prospects of business success and domestic happiness

that they may care for an old father or mother, a sick wife or child, the poor of a great city, the lonely dweller on the frontier, the millions of heathendom. It is only seven years ago that Christian missionaries and their converts were laying down their lives for their faith in China. All that many of them needed to have done to escape torture and death would have been to burn a little stick of incense before an idol. What harm would that have done? But rather than profess something which they did not believe or deny a faith that they really held, they accepted death. Did Christ consider it too much to ask? Did Paul and the other Apostles count it absurd? Is not all life full of voluntary and noble sacrifice? Shall the world of business be exempt? Shall it not have its martyrs, too, when the world, red-mouthed and ravening in its opposition to God and Righteousness and Love, calls for them?

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One of the most interesting developments of modern thought is the way in which the most advanced Science takes up and reiterates in trumpet tones Religion's age-long demand for Truth at any cost in both thought and conduct. A man who stands at the very head among the scientific teachers of the country said in an address, to his students, "The scientific method of study is characterized rather by a distinctive attitude of mind toward truth than by any new machinery for collecting facts. The scientific method insists that the student approach a problem with open mind, that he accept the facts as they really exist, that he be satisfied with no half-way solution, and that, having found the truth, he follow it whithersoever it leads."

That attitude of mind has made the difference between the modern and the ancient world with regard to Nature. It has made the difference between

ignorance, superstition and poverty on the one hand, and knowledge, power and wealth on the other. Without that spirit our progress in command over Nature would stop instantly.

Can the world of business continue to proceed and prosper on any other basis? Are we not just now beginning to see, and to experience pretty painfully, the sort of result that may be expected from conformity to false standards? Truth and Right at any cost has been and is the demand of Religion; now it is also the demand of Science. Science says that Jesus is right. Science and Religion join now in offering men a Cross. The acceptance of that Cross by the man of business is the sole condition of his having a spiritual life. The possibility of a spiritual life for the business man is simply a question of his sincerity, his moral earnestness, his courage.

A day or two ago I received a strik-



ing confirmation of this in a private letter from one of our younger business men in which he said, "The business men of to-day need most of all, it seems to me, the moral courage to manage their business independent of the methods employed by many of those with whom they have dealings, and to depend more upon their own sense of what is right and honorable to guide them." Perhaps the thing which would do the business world most good to-day would be the spectacle of a few men in each community willing to fail, if necessary, for Christ's sake.

2. Passing from the possibility to the possibilities, within his own soul, of the business man's spiritual life, we should recognize promptly the fact that these possibilities will vary greatly in different individuals. They will depend chiefly upon temperament; but education, the influences of the childhood home, and



present environment will also be influential factors. Here and there you will find a business man,—and a good one, too,—with the soul of a mystic or a poet, or the mind of a philosopher or a theologian. But he is the exception. To many a man anything like a spiritual rapture is a temperamental impossibility. If he should be told that it was his duty to “agonize in prayer” for two or three hours, or for a whole night, and should believe it, he would be in blank despair. If told to “be still and listen for the Divine voice,” it is safe to say that if he tried to do it, he would hear every noise that things animate or inanimate might make as long as his attempt lasted, but nothing that he would think of calling the Divine Voice.

But let not that man think that he has no spiritual life, or that he is incapable of it. That is not the essential thing. It is not even the ordinary thing. It is but one way in which the

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spiritual life manifests itself, and that a rather exceptional one. It is exceedingly unfortunate that the impression should have become so general that this is not only the common but the necessary experience of those who have a spiritual life. I suppose that it is due to the biographies of the saints and the exalted language of our hymns and other Christian literature. A recent writer wisely says, "The average man should be helped to see that there is reality in the sort of religion he can live; that there are as many forms of Christian experience as there are men; that the vast majority of people have no such religious experiences as they wish to have; that very few people, except those gifted with a capacity for such experiences, spend much time in religious contemplation, and that the language of noble books has grown into a conventional vocabulary that expresses aspiration quite as much as accomplishment.

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He should realize that the elemental something in religion is not poetic sentiment or even a constant consciousness of union with God; it is life in accordance with the will of God,"

There you have it. The spiritual life is "life in accordance with the will of God." It is life controlled by the things unseen and eternal. That is the essential thing. The experiences and emotions attending the effort to live such a life, as any one can see, are merely incidental and vary with the individual.

Those, therefore, who feel that they are excluded by their temperament from what many would call, though perhaps with doubtful accuracy, the higher manifestations of the spiritual life, need not feel, must not feel, that they are excluded from the thing itself and many of its most precious possibilities. For this determination to do the will of God, when it is honest, thorough, fearless, brings some delightful consequences in

its train. It brings peace, serenity, good cheer. It brings the consciousness that the disorder of our life has been reduced to a unity. It takes us out of the feverish race for wealth. Our eye being single, our whole body is full of light. It brings a consciousness of strength—inexhaustible strength—for we feel that God and the Universe are back of us. If God be for us who can be against us? It brings a clean heart, ready for simple joys; a loving heart, ready for helpful service. It elects us, and initiates us at once into the great fraternity of the good whose fellowship is a constant source of pleasure and strength. Before he knows it, many a man who thinks himself incapable of a mystic's experiences will be having them himself, if he just sets himself to do God's will.

I am aware that I am laying myself open to the charge of indulging in heroic language. But any man who

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really sets out to do the thing that God requires will find that he has entered upon a heroic struggle, and the heroic language will not be too high for him.

To know some of the possibilities of peace and power in the life spiritual men need only put up from their hearts this prayer of the Quaker poet which we so often sing:

"Dear Lord and Father of mankind,  
Forgive our feverish ways;  
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind,  
In purer love Thy service find,  
In deeper reverence, praise.

"In simple trust like theirs who heard,  
Beside the Syrian sea,  
The gracious calling of the Lord,  
Let us, like them, without a word,  
Rise up and follow Thee."

### II. THE POSSIBILITIES FOR SOCIETY.

The possibilities of the business man's spiritual life in the direction of social achievements are quite beyond our power to conceive. The most optimistic

of us, I fancy, would not be slow to admit that our social body is sick. This does not mean necessarily that the case is hopeless. It does not mean that healing forces are not at work from which much may be hoped. But it does mean that forces of disease are in serious conflict with the health-forces.

Never were men so well equipped for life. Never was there so general popular enlightenment, never such command over Nature, never such abundance of wealth, never such power of all sorts in the possession of the race. And yet men are not happy. They are not good. They are not at peace. Abysmal depths of greed, selfishness and deceit are being uncovered where, a few years ago, the highest integrity was supposed to be found. A lawlessness that laughs and snaps its fingers in the face of the Law saunters through our streets, indulges itself in secret, and when repressed and punished bursts forth in noise and vio-

lence and flame. Huge combinations of power confront each other. Vice breeds prolifically and the disgusting face of the degenerate is seen with increasing frequency among respectable men. Strange religious cults spring up like Jonah's gourd. Social theories of the most revolutionary type are rapidly gaining adherents. Respectable godlessness moves with a few swift steps toward abominable and pernicious forms of immorality. A sense of foreboding and impending catastrophe possesses many thoughtful minds and makes many a parent almost sorry that he is to have descendants who may be victims of a coming woe.

What is it? What strange sickness has smitten us? What do we need to make us well? A distinguished Roman Catholic says, "The thing that is gone out of our American life is the spirit of religion." A leading Harvard Professor says, "Organizations, consolidations,



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combinations, federations, we have in prodigal abundance, and the wheels of the social world revolve with a speed and smoothness never before attained; but the age of machinery has brought with it a new demand for persons competent to control the intricate mechanism of a new world. . . . A science of poor-relief has been devised, but where are the persons equipped with the sagacity and sympathy to utilize that science? Vast aggregations of capital are created, but where are the disinterestedness and integrity to convert new forms of industry into new instruments of social peace? An army of hand workers is organized for war, but where is the incorruptible leadership without which an army becomes a mob?"

I have no doubt that every business man here would endorse these utterances of men standing at the two extremes of religious thought. The great and



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glorious Body of civilization is waiting for a Soul. The tremendous forces of the modern world are laid at our feet, and it is as if a voice of authority said, "Here are these forces. In the hands of good men, men of spiritual vision, men of religious ideals, men committed to the doing of God's will, men who look not at things seen and temporal but at things unseen and eternal, they will establish the Kingdom of God on earth, they will lift the race to Heaven. But in the hands of men who mind earthly things, selfish men, lovers of money more than lovers of God, men of Mammon, men whose portion is in this life and who look only at things seen and temporal—in the hands of such men these forces can only bring to the world woe, woe, woe." The possibilities of a true spiritual life applied to the world's business are measured only by the possibilities of a Humanity redeemed from sin and misery.

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The spiritual life is a possibility for the business man—costly, it is true, in the first outlay, but still a possibility—and of richest reward both in his own life and in the life of others. It is not a life apart, it is an applied life. It scorns not nor refuses the good things of this world; it enjoys them, it thanks God for them, it uses them for spiritual ends. It is heroic when seen aright, but it knows it not at the time, for it is busied with very matter-of-fact things. It is the life for which the world waits, on which the world's destiny depends. Will you try to live it, my brother? Will you take the cross that Christ offers you? The way of the Cross is sometimes a lonely way. But of one Companion you will be sure—Him Who having trod the wine-press alone was unwilling that any of His disciples should tread it in the same way, and so promised, "Lo, I am with you always." Will you not cry to Him as you look

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back over a course marked, perhaps, by  
no little selfishness and sin,

"Show me, O Love, Thy wounds which  
I have made?"

And then, throwing out your defiance,  
take your stand, saying,

"Yea, with one voice, O world, though  
thou deniest;  
Stand thou on that side, for on this  
am I."

"Come, let us fling ourselves before Him,  
Cast at His feet the burden of our care."



### III

## THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE BUSINESS MAN: ITS CULTURE

I TIMOTHY 4:7.—“*And exercise thyself unto godliness.*”

In the previous sermons in this series we have spoken of the perils and the possibilities of the spiritual life of the business man. This morning we are to speak of its culture.

Timothy was one of Paul's most trusted and beloved lieutenants. He was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother. He was not a strong man with streaks of weakness in him, but a weak man with streaks of strength. But such strength as he had was of the sort to grow and spread and gradually displace the weakness. He was young, and evidently timid, of

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a delicate constitution and often sick. He needed to be warned to "flee youthful lusts," and also the love of money. But he was sincere, affectionate, teachable and devotedly loyal, and there was no man to whom the great apostle gave his love and confidence more unreservedly.

For a time he had been left by Paul in charge of the church in Ephesus. Besides the corruption of the great heathen city with which he had to contend, there was ignorance and error in the church, and a strong tendency to disputations, wrangling, and false and foolish teaching. The situation called for a man both strong and wise and pure, and the letter was written to instruct and fortify the young pastor for his difficult duties.

Our text gives one of these personal counsels, "Exercise thyself unto godliness." The word translated "exercise" is a strong one. It is the word from

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which our "gymnasium" is taken bodily. The spiritual exercise to which Timothy was urged was like the physical exercise which a man takes in a gymnasium—systematic, regular, mingling the gentle with the severe. He is in a hard position. If he is to meet its demands he must train for it. He must make himself by exercise a spiritual athlete.

If it should occur to any that the text is inappropriate or less forceful because originally addressed to a pastor rather than to people out in the world of business, let me say that I think it comes with all the more force to business men for this very reason. For if, as so often assumed, the minister's life is a sheltered life as compared with the life of a business man, and if a pastor, so sheltered, needs such an exhortation, how much more does the business man with his severer temptations! It is a word for anybody and everybody who wants

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to do his duty as a Christian in a trying situation, and who feels the need of more strength than he has.

### I. THE NATURE OF THE LIFE.

In taking up our theme let me remind you, first, of the nature of the life of which we are speaking.

It is important that we make no mistake here. We have repeatedly said that the spiritual life is not a life apart from the common occupations and recreations of men—that it is not that part of our life which we spend in religious thought and prayer, but an applied life, a practical life. But we shall commit a capital error if we allow ourselves to forget that its very essence is the recognition of the things unseen and eternal. It is a life which, from start to finish, proceeds upon the assumption, the faith, if you will—that there is a living God and an unseen world: that the spirit of man is im-



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mortal, and of inestimable worth; that man can hold fellowship with God; that our sense of right and wrong is an intimation, dim it may be, and wrong, perhaps, in particulars, but still essentially true—of the will of God which holds good for the universe and for all eternity; and the further distinctively Christian faith that God has manifested Himself, and especially His fatherhood, His forgiving love, and His purpose to redeem the world, in Jesus Christ.

Does anyone ask, "Why do you lay such stress of emphasis on these things in such a presence? Is not this a Christian congregation? Do we not all believe and assume these things?" I do it because there may be some here to-day who, perhaps unconsciously, have been more or less influenced by the cheap and superficial talk, of which there has been so much during the last thirty or forty years, or, still more, by the atmosphere of materialism which we all

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breathe, to think that these great matters of belief are not of vital importance; that conduct and character are the only real essentials; that if a man but does right it makes little or no difference what he believes with reference to things unseen; that these things unseen are necessarily uncertain; that as we cannot know about them now, to think and talk about them is only to divert attention from the more important thing, the duty of the present hour; that ethics is better than religion, and that our one effort should be to make this world fit for the people who are now here to live in rather than to spend our time trying to get them ready for a "world to come" that may not come.

But this, as some one has very strikingly said, is "the real fall of man." It takes the crown from his head, the glory from his life. It leaves him, so far as his consciousness is concerned,

with no intelligent or worthy purpose back of him, no authority above him, no destiny before him. It limits him to the Here and Now, to things tangible and perishable. It confines his moral relations to his fellow men. It draws a small circle around him, the circle of the earth, and says, "This is big enough for you; with the circle of the heavens, the universal and the eternal, you have nothing to do."

That remark about conduct and character being the essential things, and belief a matter of relatively small importance, has taking power with certain minds. But it would be hard to say anything mixing a more dangerous error with undoubted truth. It is true that the noblest beliefs, or professed beliefs, are worth little or nothing if they are not given substance and reality by conduct. But to say that the great beliefs of religion are of minor importance as compared with the

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duty of the present moment is very much as if some ignorant landsman should say to a navigator in mid-ocean, "Why do you waste your time taking observations on the sun and stars, and watching that trembling needle, and studying those charts? These winds, this water, these waves, this ship, are the things for you to attend to." Would they ever reach port?

We men of this materialistic age need to be made to feel afresh that it is our religious beliefs, and they alone, which give a moral significance to our life, provide us with a goal, and guide us toward it. Without God and the moral law the ground of moral obligation itself ceases to exist. The very distinction between right and wrong vanishes, and naught but expediency—personal and social utility—remains as a guide and stimulus to conduct. Without the belief in immortality man loses his strongest incentive to moral pro-

gress, and the star of his hope is swallowed up in infinite night.

No, my brother, the spiritual life is more than a merely ethical life. It is a life that takes hold on God and immortality, and things unseen. It is a life of ideals having the authority of law. It is a life of personal intercourse and loving fellowship, between the human spirit and the Divine Spirit. "Exercise thyself unto"—what? "Godliness."

## II. THE MEANS AND METHODS OF ITS CULTURE.

In this connection I will mention but three things.

1. If the spiritual life be such as we have defined it, it seems to me self-evident that the first requirement for its culture is *solitary thought, study and prayer*. The first thing for the man to do who wishes to guide his earthly life by a heavenly vision is to get his vision. In

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order to apply spiritual ideals to dealings with material things he must first have his ideals. To have fellowship with God he must keep in communication with God. And these are things to be accomplished only in that solitude which Walter Savage Landor has so beautifully called "the audience-chamber of God."

As we all know, solitude is not always a matter of the absence of all other persons. It can be achieved by an act of the will, or it may be thrust upon us, in a crowd. Many a man, in the midst of a life-and-death conflict, with enemies pressing upon him, and all his energies in strenuous action, has suddenly found himself, by no volition of his own, in that secret chamber of his soul, which none but God and he may enter, and there confronted with the Divine Presence and the Divine ideals. For the instant he is virtually alone.

But the frequency and power of these flashes of moral vision and Divine fellowship will depend upon the man's habitual and voluntary attitude toward the things of the Spirit. If he does not think of them how can they be present to him? And if they are not present to him how can they control his life? He will not continue very long to think of them unless he can make some progress in his thought, for he will lose his interest in them. This means that he must give some study to them. And they will have no power over him except as they express for him the will of God and lead him, in his consciousness of hopeless shortcoming and inability, to the living God for pardon, comfort and help. And this means that he must pray. The spiritual life is first of all a matter of the individual soul's relation to God and spiritual things, and the only place where that can be settled and main-



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tained is in the solitude and silence of our own souls. To keep this relation what it should be is, as we all know, not easy. It takes time. It requires a strong determination. It calls for a plan. It demands sacrifice. The average business man will readily confess that this is the great lack in his life. With his next breath he is likely to attribute it to lack of time. This is an easy excuse to make, and is not without plausibility. For the business man is hard pressed. But is it quite sincere and true? Is it time or is it will that is lacking? Time is found for the newspaper and the magazine, for the club, for the game of cards, for sport, for the theatre, for conversation, for the touring car—all well enough if rightly used. But is the life spiritual only to get what time these other things leave—the rags and ravelings of our days—and if not so much as this be left, is it to get none at all? And what is done with



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the Sundays? Asking this we see the harm of the Sunday paper, the Sunday excursion, the Sunday journey, the Sunday visiting, the week-end trip,—not necessarily wrong in themselves, on the contrary, quite possibly, innocent and good, but usurping time some of which, at least, the man ought to spend with with God and His ideals.

Do you desire a spiritual life for yourself, my brother? If so, your first need, and one that you will never out-grow, is that of a few minutes every day face to face with God in thought and prayer, and some time, on Sunday or some other day, when, with your Bible or some other good book as your guide, you will by study make an honest effort to increase your knowledge of spiritual things, clear your moral vision, purify your heart and strengthen your will.

No fact in the life of Jesus stands out in bolder relief than that He constantly

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renewed His strength through communion with His Father.

"Cold mountains and the midnight air  
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer."

If He could not do without prayer can you or I? - "Exercise thyself unto godliness" in solitary thought, study and prayer.

Here again let me quote from the high authority in science to whom we have referred in a previous discourse. Speaking on the "Significance of Prayer," he says, "Does the scientific spirit tend to develop this deeper consciousness, this inner voice? I believe profoundly that it does. . . . We have become accustomed in these last years to a measure of personal and official dishonesty which is utterly demoralizing. Well-meaning men go wrong morally, in their intellectual judgments, in practical matters, and they excuse themselves for a refusal to listen to the inner voice on the ground,

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‘What I have done is as nearly right as was necessary.’ These moral compromises form the cogs in the machinery which connect good men with worse, and it is astonishing to find how simple is the machinery and how few links are needed to reach from the honest business man to the dishonest promoter, from the high-minded public officer to the political grafter. Into this atmosphere of compromises, of shiftiness, of uncertainty, the voice of science comes with the word, ‘Nothing is worth while but the truth; make no compromises with yourself, accept no half-truth; do not delude yourself into thinking you are acting from one motive when you are really prompted by another; do not lie to yourself; if you are not strong enough to be righteous, at least be intellectually sincere.’ In bringing this message to the individual soul the science of our day is sounding the highest ethical note of which men

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are capable, and he who disciplines his conscience to heed it is . . . entering already into communion with Him who is the author of his spiritual life." "To do this is to pray in the highest sense."<sup>1</sup>

2. The second thing that I will mention as important in the culture of the business man's spiritual life is *participation in common worship*.

A good many business men, apparently, have reached the conclusion that they can get on without this aid—in fact that it is not an aid to them. Admitting that, all too often, the service of the sanctuary, and especially the preaching, is not what it ought to be, I wish to say that this whole matter is, to a far greater extent than they imagine, in the hands of the laity. That virile preacher, Dr. Rainsford, formerly rector of St. George's Church, New York, once said, "I suppose the time

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<sup>1</sup> Henry S. Pritchett, "What is Religion?"

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will come when our business men will help us . . . Alas! they do not yet do it. When, for instance, a great railroad president, or a great lawyer, or a great politician, will tell the clergyman he trusts something of the inwardness of the hour, will tell him the struggle between light and darkness going on in the business field, between truth and lies, between knavery and righteousness, bribery and honesty—when, I say, he does this, the man who speaks in the pulpit can speak with power.” Yes, and he will pray and read the Scripture with power, too. Daniel Webster once said, “I want my pastor to come to me in the spirit of the gospel, saying, ‘You are mortal. Your probation is brief. Your work must be done speedily. You are immortal too. You are hastening to the bar of God; the judge even now standeth at the door.’ When I am thus admonished I have no disposition either to muse or sleep.” Such an ut-

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terance coming from any man would rarely fail to strike fire from a preacher's soul. If our business men, instead of regarding the presence of a minister as a signal for assuming a more impenetrable reserve, would treat him as one of themselves, and give him as much of their confidence as he shows himself worthy to receive, they would find the church services rapidly taking on a warm, living, sympathetic, practical, bracing quality, which is now so often conspicuously lacking.

But aside from the question of the comparative quality of the services and the preaching, there is an inherent necessity and a duty here which no thoughtful man should be slow to recognize. The spiritual life is a social life. It is primarily an individual thing—intensely so. But its goings-forth have always a social aim and end, for its essence is love. It craves love and fellowship, and it wants to

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give love and fellowship. It starves and pines if its desires be denied. The true children of the Lord both wish and need to confess their sins, render their thanks, offer their prayers, enjoy their blessings, indulge their hopes together. No man can be either as good or as bad alone as he can be in company. No man can be a good Christian all by himself. Common worship is an inherent necessity of the spiritual life—a necessity which the greatest and best of men have most deeply felt. What a living source of [spiritual strength Phillips Brooks was, and still is, to countless persons. Surely a man like him has little need to go to church! And yet, to a friend, a young married woman who told him she only went to church once on Sunday, he said that when he was in Germany he had tried going to the German churches in order to get religion and German at the same time; but he discovered that he was not good



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enough to do without going to his own church twice every Sunday.

To William E. Gladstone, certainly one of the most powerful as he was one of the hardest worked men in the last century, common worship was one of the things he could not do without, and through it he constantly fed his soul.

One of the most striking passages in the fascinating autobiography of Mr. Andrew D. White, a pronounced liberal in religion, is that in which he bears his testimony to the value of public worship.

"It will, in my opinion," he says, "be a sad day for this or for any people when there shall have come in them an atrophy of the religious nature . . . when men, instead of meeting their fellowmen in assemblages for public worship which give them a sense of brotherhood, shall lounge at home or in clubs; when men and women, instead



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of bringing themselves at stated periods into an atmosphere of prayer, praise and aspiration, to hear the discussion of higher spiritual themes, to be stirred by appeals to their nobler nature, in behalf of faith, hope and charity, and to be moved by a closer realization of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, shall stay at home and give their thoughts to the Sunday papers, or to the conduct of their business, or to the languid search for some refuge from boredom."

In order that attendance at public worship may not fall short of its aim it should have three characteristics. It should be regular. Irregularity in church attendance is accompanied by disadvantages corresponding exactly to those resulting from irregularity in attending school or one's place of business; and, as in these other matters, it is likely to end in serious and disastrous neglect. The occasional absence be-

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comes the occasional presence. Irregular attendance always tends to become more and more infrequent, until it ceases altogether. It must in the second place be devout. That means that the spirit of the worshipper should be active, that he should realize that he comes to church not to have everything done for him, but to do something for his own soul, to make an offering of his own unto God, and to help others. In the third place, the attendant should be a member in full communion. Until he is that he is not completely incorporated into the worshipping body. His share in and his contribution to the life of that body is thereby diminished and enfeebled.

Our business men who absent themselves wholly or in part from the worship of God's house know not what they do. They cut themselves off from one of the chiefest and most vital of all the sources of spiritual life.

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3. The third and last means for the culture of the spiritual life of which I shall speak is that of *the application of our spiritual ideals to our conduct*—the actual doing of the things about which we think and talk and pray and sing and dream. Without this our faith tends rapidly to become unreal and insincere. Faith without works is dead. Faith and conduct, aspiration and action, are constantly re-acting upon one another. Why is it that men's conduct is so bad—that they are so greedy, so sensual, so inconsiderate, so earthly? Because they lack vision, because they do not go alone with God into the secret of His tabernacle to be filled with His truth and love and power. And why do they lack vision? Why do they have no fellowship with God? Because their conduct is bad; they do the things they ought not, they leave undone the things they ought to do.

In this series of sermons my chief

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aim has been to touch men on what is commonly called the spiritual side of their natures. I wanted to make them more conscious of God, more sensitive to the world of things unseen. I wanted to excite in them a hunger and thirst for the righteousness that cometh down from above. But here and now I want to impress them with the fact that if they really desire the presence and power of God in their souls the most effective way of securing it is by actually trying to do His will in their daily intercourse with their fellow men. Try to be honest, and fair, and true, and pure, and kind, my brother, to control your appetites, your temper, your desire for money—to show compassion, to prevent injustice and suffering, to promote the common welfare, not shrinking from the necessary sacrifice, and do it all for God's sake, and you shall feel the Divine power working in you, and the joy of a new life.

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Don't stop to ask whether that is possible or practicable. Don't stop to say, "Yes, but where is that going to land us?" True, Jesus told us that we must "count the cost," but the "cost" is the possible sum total. No man can tell the different items in advance. The sum total is the whole self. Be ready if need be to give that, and as Jesus utters His call, rise and follow. Do the next thing. He will show thee, O man, what to do. It is impossible for one man to lay down a whole programme for another, or for himself. But if only there be the will to do what God through Jesus bids, one thing will lead to another. The faithful performance of one duty will give insight and power for the next. If any man will do His will he shall know. And not only shall he know; he shall feel, he shall be glad, he shall be strong. Exercise yourself unto godliness by applying your ideals to life.

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### CONCLUSION

These three things—solitary thought, study and prayer; spiritual fellowship in worship, and the patient application of the ideals given us on the mount to life on the plain, together make a true life of the spirit here on earth. And these three are one. Without either the life fails and dies.

“Exercise thyself unto godliness.” That is more than an apostolic exhortation. It embodies a divine law. It is the price of possession. No one can have a spiritual life unless he is willing to exert himself for it. We must attend to it, we must train ourselves in it. “How shall we escape if we neglect?”

And why do I thus speak? For two overwhelming reasons. First, because of the infinite value of your soul. Your soul is you. The spiritual life is your soul-life, your real life, without which your immortality is a curse.

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“What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own life?”

Second, for the welfare of society. Our times are big with change and destiny. God only knows the thing that is conceived in History's dark womb and that is struggling to the birth. Is it Ishmael, son of the desert and son of strife, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him? Or is it Isaac, son of laughter, whose tents are spread in green pastures and beside still waters? God knows. But you business men can do much to determine which. You are on one side in a struggle upon which the attention of men is riveted, to which the strength of men is given, as to nothing else in our time. The other side has its duties and responsibilities. But so do you have yours, and they are great. Tremendous forces are in your hands. Use them for God, for peace and good-will, for the Kingdom of Christ—and so goes



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this weary world. Use them for self, and time and sense, for the perpetuation of special privilege and arbitrary power—and back and down we go to the foot of the hill up which humanity has been so painfully climbing for nineteen hundred years.

“Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock.

“And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”

“But, beloved, we are persuaded bet-



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ter things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

The following is an editorial taken some time ago from an issue of the *Wall Street Journal*. The publication was then under an editorial management different from the present. The present editor, after glancing over the paragraph the other day, remarked, "I am sorry that I cannot say that I wrote it. It is sound doctrine."

"What America needs more than railway extension, and Western irrigation, and a low tariff, and a bigger wheat crop, and a merchant marine and a new navy, is a revival of piety, the kind mother and father used to have—piety that counted it good business to stop for daily family prayers before breakfast, right in the middle of the harvest; that quit work a half hour earlier Thursday night so as to get the chores done and go to prayer-meeting; that borrowed money to pay the preacher's salary and prayed fervently in secret for the salvation of the rich man who looked with scorn on such unbusinesslike behaviour. That's what we need now to clean this country of the filth of graft, and of greed, petty and big; of worship of fine houses and big lands and high office and grand social functions. What is this thing which we are worshipping but a vain repetition of what decayed nations fell down and worshipped just before their light went out? Great wealth never made a nation substantial nor honorable. There is nothing on earth that looks good that is so dangerous for a man or a nation to handle as quick, easy, big money. If you do resist its deadly influence, the chances are that it will get your son. It takes greater and finer heroism to dare to be poor in America than to charge on earthworks in Manchuria."







